IN TIME OF SORROW

By

CHARLES LEWIS SLATTERY

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IN TIME OF SORROW

BY BISHOP SLATTERY

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IN TIME OF SORROW

A Book of Consolation

BY

CHARLES LEWIS SLATTERY

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PREFACE

Several years ago the Messrs. Macmillan asked me if I would write a book for them which they might hope would comfort people in bereavement. They happened to know that I had been going in and out among the sorrowing for more than a quarter century, and they believed that I might find it possible to say to the reader some of the things I had been saying to men and women face to face. I should hardly have ventured upon the task without their invitation, but I promised to make the attempt.

The years have gone by, and, though this promise has been constantly in my mind, I have not hitherto met the mood which induced me to write. Spending part of a quiet holiday in Norfolk during this summer, I have been impelled to begin the book; and here, on this silent hilltop in Surrey, looking

down upon broad moors and gentle hills, and across to the distant horizon, I have finished it. The churches everywhere bear witness to the mourning of England for the soldiers who died in the Great War, and the flowers kept fresh about their memorials testify that the sorrow is still poignant. With this grief gnawing at their hearts, the whole people is rising with courage to a new and finer life. Never have I seen so many beautiful, happy children. They are the symbol of the England that is to be, purified and glorified by its heavy sorrow. made ready for the conflicts that shall come, that over them all it may have a joyful victory.

In such an atmosphere of confidence and peace, this book has been written. May it find its way to troubled hearts and bring to them consolation.

C. L. S.

NEWLANDS IN SURREY
25 *August* 1926

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CHAPTER I

Submission to the Inevitable

When great sorrow overwhelms us, as we stagger under the utter amazement of it, there comes a moment which seems a moment of peace. This is the moment when, as in a flash, we see that our sorrow is inevitable. It is not inevitable, we think, at that moment, but it is inevitable sometime. Sorrow is part of life. We cannot imagine any life which has accomplished a considerable number of years without finding this element of tragedy somewhere entering in.

The first reaction to such a word of consolation is the exclamation, "This is nothing more than stoicism." As we read the lives of such Stoics as Seneca and Epictetus and Marcus

Aurelius, we pity the blind resignation which sees no light beyond the blank negation of their hopes. We rightly feel that God has given to us, as Christians, a marvellous confidence beyond the point which the Stoics reached. We are right about that. Nevertheless, the resignation of the Stoic was a noble achievement. As Christ said, "By their fruits ye shall know them," so by the fineness of the character of such a man as Marcus Aurelius we suspect, at least, of what heroic fibre his stoicism was made. Therefore, coming down to our own experience, we need not blush because we find the first consolation for our grief in the sense that, some way, it is inevitable.

We are all acquainted with the arguments which men put forth to prove to themselves that sorrow is not inevitable. They say that God never could allow it. It is only man's perversity which causes it. Of course the individual man far along in a dis-

torted history cannot help sorrow; but mankind could have helped it. If Adam, or someone else, had not started the ugly custom of sinning against both God and man, this world would have been so peaceably ordered that we should never have known sorrow or death.

The problem involved in this simple utterance is too profound to be treated satisfactorily in a book like this. It is the toughest problem the human mind can attack, for it is the whole problem of evil in the world. But there is one general principle which seems to me clear: God is the absolute Master of His world. Whatever is in this world is here by His permission. Because we believe in His goodness and love, we venture to say that there is a good which transcends all the evil. That good we imagine is man's freedom. We dream that God desires in His human children not puppets (however perfect), but genuine friends who can choose

Him and, by the same token, reject Him. Thereby the abyss is revealed by the side of the shining mountain. Man can ascend into the heavens and he can go down to the depths of hell. That there may be a Saint Francis, there must be an opportunity to be a Caesar Borgia.

We may ask endlessly why God should have used a method of winning friends which involved the hideous alternative of evil choices. Only He can answer that question. But every man with his eyes open can answer the question, "Is this the plan by which the world is now ordered?" The experience of all the men we know or can read about shows that men, having a choice, often do choose the evil; the good suffer for the errors, mistakes, and crimes of the bad; and pain, death, and sorrow are firmly intrenched in the world. Why it is, we all find impossible to answer. That it is, is a plain fact.

People sometimes believe that they will honour God if they will take from Him all responsibility for the ordering of His world. There is only one way to accomplish this feat and that is by giving God so mighty a rival that we must admit that God is not almighty, that He is not supreme in His own world. History is filled with the records of escape into some form of dualism, but I believe that no one who has once felt the power of Christ and His revelation of the Father can ever blunder into that narrow passage. This is God's world, every inch of it, every electron of it. We honour Him most when we put upon Him the full responsibility for it. We may be confident that, as the poet sang, He loves that responsiblity.

So when sorrow smites us, the first glimmer of consolation may rightly come in the conviction that it is inevitable. It may be, for the moment, a blind submission. We may later

contemplate the infinite good, which could not be won except through freedom and harsh experience and bitter pain. But we are not ready for that yet. We are in God's world, filled with the mystery of joy and sorrow. We have known the sweetness of the joy. Now we know the tang of the sorrow. Before we know why, before we ask why, we lie down, as it were, under the weight of our sorrow. It is the submission, if you will, of the saint of India, contemplating Nirvana. It is the submission, perhaps, of the saint of ancient Rome, contemplating the dull end of futile struggle. But it is a mood which has brought comfort. It is not to be despised or neglected. It is the beginning of a trust in God and in the methods of His universe, and therefore it is the beginning of peace.

CHAPTER II

The Possible Uses of Separation

The tragedy of death lies in the separation of those who are bound close by ties of love. If you believe in God's love you may not grieve for the sake of the loved one who has vanished. That is no empty consolation when a bereaved soul says to itself, "I would not have my beloved return to this life, even were it possible." Death is dreaded as a black abyss till your dearest companion dies; then it is transfigured, and you know that life for that companion lies firm and sure ahead. Men have said, "Christ by his death hath taken away the sting of death." That assurance is repeated in the presence of every dying son of Adam when the witness is one who cares supremely for the person who is passing. Old

age is really glad to go; for years of increasing feebleness and limitation do not make a long sojourn in this world attractive. And even when youth goes out, we straightway fall to thinking what God must have in store for so brave and strong a spirit. No; the tragedy of death is for those who tarry while the door opens to receive the one who is vanishing. The loneliness and the silence are often unspeakable grief, but it is the grief of the survivor for himself.

Therefore, we wisely enquire, What possible uses may this separation have for the survivor? Later we may try to imagine what it may mean for the soul which has gone.

First of all, separation often tells us what we never before knew concerning our beloved. While we have the physical presence with us we may dwell upon the physical beauty of the face, the ring of the laughter, the radiance of the unselfish smile, the constant ministry of helpful deeds to

us and to the causes we cherish. Now all the accidents of life are over, and we dwell upon the spirit within and behind all these gracious manifestations of its power. We begin to know, as we never could have known otherwise, the essential and eternal qualities of our loved one. The light of eternity shines upon the soul, and we see it as it is.

One of the most illuminating comments in the Gospels is that the Lord's disciples did not understand Christ's words while He was with them in the days of His flesh, but they did understand them after He had vanished from them. After His death they were to know His spiritual presence, and He was to be with them as never before. Christ, in His perfect humanity, shows us what must be repeated in all humanity in so far as it rises in any degree to the heights on which He lived and died. When a mother dies, the child lives again all his past: his forgotten

childhood revives, his first going from home to the larger world of school or college is recalled, his struggle to enter his life-work becomes vivid, the days of his triumph or his utter failure at length shine clear in the light of a mother's love. He scarcely heeded her word of warning or of encouragement, her word of trust or of hope, when it was spoken: now he hears that word ringing from the unseen world, and he knows, first, what it meant for his life at the time; then, what it means for him today; and finally, what it must mean to him for ever. He believes that now for the first time he really knows his mother and her love. Death has revealed her inmost glory. Had it not been for this separation he would have lost the most sacred part of his understanding and appreciation of her character.

If God's love for us is to be demonstrated, we must try to picture life whole. The whole of life cannot be

measured in the earthly span from birth to dying; that is but the merest fragment. Life must be conceived as reaching out beyond death into the unmeasured distances. As life is, above all things, our relationship to those we love and have loved, so the eternal aspect of that relationship is of prime importance. Even to think that we should fail to know the best in those we love would be torture; to reach the conviction that by the agony of a temporary separation we had attained that fuller knowledge would instantly lift that agony into the realm of a higher joy. We should thank God for its pain at the last, for it has brought us into the depths and heights of our love. Through it we know the most beautiful; we see the life in the spirit, in the profoundest reality; we see it somewhat as God sees it.

Another feature of separation is that it gives to those who survive the high privilege of showing afresh the

ardour of their love for the departed spirit. If we start with the Christian assurance that God is love, it is impossible that we should fear that anything but good can befall the spirit that has been taken into His nearer keeping. Even Socrates was sure that no ill could happen to a good man, alive or dead. There is pain in separation: all human experience teaches us that fact. Very well, since we may have the right to believe that the departed spirit is in peace, we may confidently affirm that the surviving companion bears the sorrow of separation for both the departed and for himself. He measures his love by his loneliness. He would not have the pang of separation one whit less sharp, because its intensity is the measure of his love. Selfish love says, "Oh, that I may be the first to go," that is, to avoid the sorrow of living alone. Unselfish love prays day and night that the beloved may be happy to the very end, and dreads

nothing so much as that this loved one may be left without the loving care which each hour has been bestowed upon him. The tragedy of life is not when father and mother die and leave their children: that is normal and right. The real tragedy is when all the children die before both the parents are gone, and an old man or an old woman lives, childless and forlorn, without the ministrations of at least one person who understands all. No son or daughter, however dependent on a parent's care, could desire to leave that parent to such a plight. If sorrow comes, the loving child prays that he may bear it all.

Now what, may we say, is the advantage of separation for the spirit who has passed the gates of death? Reverence and sound sense alike bid us beware of assuming to know that which is shrouded with impenetrable mystery. We can make only vague surmises. But since life is all one,

we may venture to believe that the experience here may be some warning of the experience hereafter. I see no way of proving to ourselves that the dead know what we are doing in this world. It may be that they do see us and hear us. In any case, I am sure that they know our love for them and, consequently, our loneliness without their known presence. Whatever their knowledge of us, therefore, they must also have this sense of separation. Perhaps they too mourn that there must be separation; but their grief, one may be sure, is instantly absorbed in the certainty of a greater joy. For being in a higher stage of life they must be able, I think, to look down upon this lower stage where we now live with an understanding which is not yet vouchsafed to us.

All we can know of the hereafter is what we may deduce from the life which we are now living. The only safe illustration is from the stages in

this life. Let me give an illustration from experience which I know. A mother died leaving her husband and a young son to mourn her. This father and this little boy became all in all to one another. The boy reached his twelfth year, and the father knew that he must be sent away to school, that he might have the training and the fellowship with other boys which the great school would give. So, with a heavy heart, the father sent the child away. No sooner had the sensitive boy reached the school than he began to write to his father and to his grandparents heartbreaking letters describing his homesickness, and pleading that his father come and take him home. The father longed to do so, for he wanted the child as much as the child wanted him. The grandparents were melted and commanded the boy's father to go and bring him home. But the father stood firm. And the sensitive boy grew into a strong and useful

man, partly because he had a rich inheritance of character, and partly because his father had the wisdom to insist on the separation. The father did grieve that his boy was forced to live through the wretchedness and darkness of his homesickness, but, being on a higher plane of life, he saw beyond the present, and for the joy that was set before the boy's life he was content to endure the pain in his own heart and, by sympathy, in the heart of his boy. He had longer views of life and its destiny, so that the sorrow was each day, for that father, turned into joy. I can never forget the light in his face as he told me the story of his fortitude and its reward.

That, it seems to me, is a fair picture of what we may believe is the share which the departed spirit must have in our separations. Only, because the difference between the life beyond ours and this life here must be unthinkably greater than the dif-

ference between maturity and childhood, it seems clear that the sense of pain must be correspondingly less and the assurance of victory and happiness correspondingly more nearly complete. Even if the departed know our loneliness, they cannot grieve as we grieve. When a child falls and hurts himself he weeps, but the loving and sympathetic parent does not weep with him. The child thinks his bruise an irreparable disaster. The parent knows it is as nothing and that in a moment the child will be singing and laughing, quite forgetful of his fall. It is difficult to imagine that for the vanished spirit there can be any such sorrow as the survivor must endure. That grief, that loneliness the survivor bears for the sake of his love, and he bears it for both.

It is quite within the realm of devout imagination to believe that those who pass into the other world do not know what is happening in our stage

of life. The separation for them may perhaps be as real as it is for us. For them too there may be richness and growth wrapped in the experience. They too will reach out to know those from whom they have been parted. They will learn to know them in their deeper, more real selves. They will await in glad expectation the reunion when all shadows shall be done away, and they shall see their beloved revealed face to face in all the glory of purified and ennobled character.

For both the departed and the survivor there is one good which is beyond all other good, which I have not mentioned, and which I shall develop in a later chapter. I may but refer to it here. Sometimes the companions of this life are so absorbed in one another, so satisfied in their companionship, that they forget to seek the comradeship of the Highest. They forget God, though they say that they believe in Him and know

Him. When a supreme separation comes, men often discover God as for the first time. Our Saviour was in the pathos of loneliness when He told His disciples that they should all forsake Him in His bitter need and leave Him alone. And then He told them His compensation. "Yet," He added, "I am not alone; the Father is with me."

If God, through the separations of life, can draw us into the consciousness of His everlasting love, we may learn to thank Him for that price which we have paid for the greatest gift of time and of eternity.

CHAPTER III

The Final Test of Love

The critic of God's universe is prone to ask why the separation between this world and the next could not have been accomplished by some less harrowing scene than death. We commonly call death the great mystery; and we cannot expect to fathom that mystery. But we may, on reflection, reduce its blackness. We may be comforted if we can discover that death serves an exalted purpose in life.

There is a law throughout the world that life is continued for some by the death of others. The great fishes in the sea live by the death of the little fishes. The mighty beasts of the forest live by the death of the small animals, whose utmost cunning can rarely escape their destined fate.

One of the hypotheses of science is that man has reached his present physical development through a similar sacrifice of the weaker members of the human race. All this is involuntary sacrifice, and it is deeply embedded in the maintenance of life in the world.

We go a step higher, and we think of the diamond or the pearl which is joyfully worn by the bride as the gift of the bridegroom. It seems to be all light and gladness. But within its beauty are the sombre depths of death. The men who won that pearl or that diamond, or the gold in which it is set, often risked and gave their lives to win it. Our houses are comfortable in winter because there is coal to burn. But we never fully pay for that coal. The men who dig it risk their lives or shorten them through their hazardous occupation. Death lies deep in the glowing light of your leaping winter fire. There may be a bit of cut-glass on your

table. It catches and radiates the light. But here too lurks death. The men who bent over that frail crystal filing away its surface may have taken the biting dust into their lungs and have died in consequence, before their time. These various people are not consciously dying that you may have comfort and gaiety; they take their chances because men who take such risks receive a larger economic return. But in spite of that selfish ingredient, they die for you.

We go a step higher still, and think of the great scientists who shocked the conservative leaders of their day by the announcement of their discoveries, and were imprisoned or killed outright. We think of men like Roger Bacon, who told his contemporaries the unwelcome truth and was kept a prisoner till life was useless for him. We think of the great reformers like Telemachus, who stopped the gladiatorial combats by himself jumping into the arena and

thus dying to shock a cruel world into pity. We think of great soldiers like Nathan Hale, who so loved the patriot's cause that when he was condemned to die he said that he mourned only because he had but one life to give to his country. A vast army of heroes in all departments of endeavour have purged our civilization of its most acid bitterness; and life is happier today because a host of men and women have died for its betterment. Love may be here, but it is love in the abstract. It is love for an ideal—a nation, civilization, humanity.

So let us rise yet higher and contemplate the men who gladly die for individuals whom they love. Each man, if he is candid, can probably recall the people who have given up part of their life for him and, in so far forth, have died for him. You may remember the teacher at school with real genius who gave up what might have been a career that he

might start a few boys on the right road, inspire them with vision, and put the love of God in their hearts. You, being one of those boys, grown a man, may reflect upon the narrow income that this teacher received; you may discover with what ceaseless toil outside his classroom that teacher eked out his professional salary lest his family starve; and then you must ask whether that dear teacher did not die of overwork long before his time. He gave life willingly, joyfully, that you might live more abundantly. He died for his boys, and among them, you. Or you may recall the family physician who tended you as a child. You trusted him and loved him as one of your own family. And now that you think of it, you believe he loved you as his own son. You remember that one night you were suddenly and alarmingly ill, and though the doctor himself was ill he was sent for, and he came at the risk of his own life to minister to you.

Someone told you that this doctor was never quite well after that night's exposure. You open your eyes wide and ask if he did not give his life for you and for the other patients whom he loved. Or, again, you may think of the clergyman who was your father's friend and therefore yours. There was a report that his hair turned grey in a single night because one of his parishioners whom he trusted was clearly proved to have done an infamous deed. He cared for you in the same genuine way that he cared for that unfortunate criminal. And you remember how the lines in his forehead deepened as he besought you to beware of sowing the wild oats you told him you thought did not matter. This man too vanished before his time, in that he cared intensely for men's highest welfare—not men in general, but particular men who lived in your parish, and among them, you.

I can imagine that, as the reader

goes through these categories of loving sacrifice, he will say to himself: "This is all true, but there is no especial merit in this sacrifice. These men could not help throwing their lives away. It was their nature to die for others." Yes, I am sure it was indeed their nature to die for others. That is what love is. It is so thoroughgoing that it must give itself the final test to prove the depth and reality of love. Professor Mackail in his book on *Poetry* tells this story of a young bird which fell out of its nest immediately in front of a hound. The hound was instinctively about to pounce upon the tiny creature, when the mother bird flew down to protect her young. This mother bird flew again and again at the glittering teeth of the hound, till she fell dead before him. The hound stood still in awe before this miracle of love. The mother had died, but the birdling was safe. It was her nature to die that her offspring might live.

One of my friends drove an ambulance at Verdun in the Great War. He told me how he drove his motor back and forth over the rough fields, rescuing wounded soldiers. The shells fell all about him as he made his perilous journeys. I asked him if he trembled in the face of the danger. "No," he replied, "I felt the majesty of the work our men were doing, and I longed to give the utmost proof how much I cared. I wanted to die then and there, to tell it." That again shows the nature which uses death as the final and complete symbol of love.

So, we dare to say, death is intrenched in the very heart of the mystery of life. If we did not have death we should miss the peak of joy, which is to tell the beloved the height and depth and breadth and length of our love. We may come to such desire of love that nothing else will satisfy us but to die for the sake of that love. There is a recklessness

and a dash in love that will be content with nothing else.

All these considerations reach their fulfilment in the life of Christ. He came to reveal the love of man and, at the same moment, the love of God. We sometimes say that the Incarnation would have come even if man had not sinned, but that the Atonement was only because Christ entered a sinful world. It is useless to speculate as to what might have happened had conditions been other than they were. But, in some way, in view of what the finest human love has done to express its ultimate care for the beloved, it seems more and more inevitable that God Himself will not be outdone by His creatures. He too will not be satisfied till He has told humanity through His only beloved Son that His love must pass through the mystery of death. "Greater love hath no man than this," said Jesus in the words of the Fourth Gospel, "that a man lay down his life for his

friends." And once more He said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." He is here revealing the deeper meaning of the Twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd"—He giveth His life for me.

Every death becomes glorious when we see it in the light of this divine love. We sometimes desire for our friends and relatives an unconscious passing from this life. We bemoan the hour when they and we together must face the fact of the dissolution of this earthly body. We think that they will be afraid and will tremble for the future. So we hope that sudden death may be granted to them. Experience forbids this hope. When it is given to an aged Christian man or woman to know that death is very near, then the soul rises in its majesty and partakes of some of that new life which lies so close. The strong and well become like the private soldiers in an army, and the

dying lover takes the command, as a victorious general. There may be hours of silence, hours of tension, when the fading life is gathering its whole strength to recall all the messages that should be spoken in this last opportunity for speech on earth. At length the last messages are given. No word is wasted. No word is forgotten. All the love of a lifetime is crowded into these last phrases. As one looks back upon that scene of dying, one says to oneself that the best of the life of the beloved would have been unknown had one not seen how this noble Christian met death. There was no fear, no dread, no sorrow. There was nothing but love. And as the spirit passed, the only thought was that love, being stronger than death, is alive for evermore.

Death, then, is still a great mystery. But it is not a mystery shrouded in darkness. Its mystery is of the light. It is a profound part of life,

capable of displaying, in those who face it with courage, a richness and a beauty which no other part of life can equal. It is surely no accident that the greatest of all thinkers, St. Paul, taught just two truths—the love of Christ's death, and the power of His resurrection. They are two sides of one great truth. To death, whether it be the death of the King of Kings or the death of an unknown man on the edge of a little village, we owe the revelation of perfect love. No one who has felt truly the inevitable experiences of life can be afraid, whether for himself or for those he loves best, to accept death as part of human life. For it tells what life without it could not proclaim; it tells the everlasting dominance of love, which makes all life that it touches immortal.

CHAPTER IV

God's Loving Surprise for Humanity

Even if you were to grant that separation and death have a meaning which can be harmonized with your belief that God is a loving Father, you will quite naturally ask why it is that God puts upon His children the strain of not knowing exactly what sort of life it is to which they shall be admitted, through the gate of death. I shall later go over the reasons why we may trust in a continuance of our life; but here I wish frankly to admit that, so far as I can see, there has been no revelation, either through valid religious experience or through valid scientific research, of the details of that life.

Men who believe that in Christ we have the fullest possible revelation of

eternal realities will seek in vain among His words for any definite news of the other world. Even the Fourth Gospel, which goes farther than any other written report of His words about the future, tells us only the comfort of knowing that we shall ascend to the place where He is and with Him continually dwell. "Let not your hearts be troubled," He said: "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also." That promise has brought comfort to all the Christian generations. It tells the very best and happiest. He who healed the sick, gave courage to the forlorn, turned sinners to glad righteousness, and made inefficient people into leaders of history; He to whom the poor and the outcast turned with hope; He to whom little children instinctively turned with

trust and love—He is to be the centre and the joy of that life. No grim theological heaven fenced in by the logic of controversial warriors is this: it is open and free and blithe with the openness, the freedom, and the joy of the Lord Jesus.

This assurance is momentous. But when you ask whether in that land of peace and joy there are to be hills and valleys, cities and villages, pastimes and occupations such as we have here—of all this there is in the words of Jesus not one syllable.

I am of course aware that there is a group of people who believe that direct messages have come from the spirit world telling us somewhat of the nature of the life there. I know that among these people are men of scientific training, learned in the art of accurate observation. I have respect for these men, and should honour their testimony were there general agreement. But so far the witness is divided: most of the scien-

tific investigators come back with either a flat denial of any real proof, or the assurance of an open mind not yet convinced. My own feeling is that the ultimate result of such investigation will be a complete No. In any case, I cannot believe that the surest peace and consolation lies in any such doubtful tapping of the wall which separates our world from the next. I believe more and more that God, for most loving reasons, does not intend us to know the details of the future life.

Before I give these more important reasons, let us ask ourselves how we could rationally expect, with our present consciousness, to understand any description of a world which must certainly be different from our own, even though someone who has vanished should return to tell us of it. We need only a moment's reflection to convince us how exceedingly limited our present consciousness is. Immanuel Kant taught the world that

time and space are conditions of our earth consciousness and do not pertain to eternal reality; and by his antinomies he made an eloquent plea for his contention. Whether that be true, I cannot say; but I am aware that we in this life cannot know anything which is not in time, anything which is not in space. Then, think of the spectrum. Every human eye, we imagine, sees just about the same shade of colour at either end of the spectrum. But one who reads attentively the account which the great naturalist Fabre gives of the insect world must wonder whether the insect, astonishingly sensitive to its environment, may perhaps be seeing colours which no human eye in this life ever can see. In the same way, we are exceedingly limited in our hearing. We probably hear only a few of the sounds with which the universe is filled. Milton sang of the music of the spheres, imagining that had our ears the power they might

be hearing, in the revolving of the planets, a deep celestial music. George Eliot, on the other hand, once said that were our ears sufficiently sensitive they might hear the grass growing. The sonorous and the great we cannot hear; the delicate and the minute we cannot hear. As with sight, so with hearing, we are very limited in our consciousness. Again, we know that we can perceive objects only in three dimensions. In the world to come it may be ours to know objects in four, or perhaps twenty dimensions.

Is it not natural that we should ask ourselves how we could expect to know any world at all different from our own? If an angel from heaven were to visit us to tell us the details of that life, I think we could understand nothing of his story. It necessarily would be in a language altogether beyond our comprehension.

We may catch intimations of the difficulties involved by a reference to

the more or less sealed departments of our present existence. Let us think of a boy of five trying to understand the problems which confront his father. Imagine that the father comes home one evening and tells the boy's mother that there has been a crash in the business world: everything is gone, their home must be sold, and life must be bravely started anew in some other place. The boy knows that his father is troubled; he sees his mother's tears; but what it is all about he is unable to tell. What would the child understand if his father began to talk to him of stocks and bonds, fluctuations of the market, the law of supply and demand, and all the other intricacies of economics? Not one word, we may be sure. Would you not say that he was a kind father who allowed his boy to lead his child's life without attempting any foreshadowing of the mature life ahead, allowing the joys and sorrows of maturity to wait till ma-

turity was reached? Still further, imagine a savage in Central Africa to whom you should go and whom, through an interpreter, you should try to instruct in the manners and customs of our Western civilization. That savage knows no food except the fish he can catch in the stream or the fruit and game he can gain from the forest. Now suppose you began to describe a modern city. You might point to a hill in his horizon and say that you knew a building higher than that hill. Or you might compare his method of travel with your own. He must mount a humble beast of burden or walk and so accomplish but a few miles each day. Whereas, you would explain, when you wished to travel, you entered what you called a train, drawn by steam or electricity, and rushed into space at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour. Or should you be in mad haste, you would enter an airplane and, mounting into the clouds,

fly away at the rate of one hundred and fifty miles an hour. What would that African savage understand of your story? Probably he would not believe you, but if he did think you a reliable person, he would certainly not understand a word you said. The only way you could make him understand would be to bring him into some modern city like Paris or London, Boston or New York, and let him experience the civilization of which in vain you had tried to tell him.

Now must we not believe that the life to which we tend in the other world is far more different from this life than the life of a mature man is different from that of a child of five; far more different than the life of a man in Paris or New York is different from that of an African savage? It seems to me inevitable. For all these reasons I see no way in which we could rationally expect to be told of any life different from our own,

seeing that our present consciousness is straitly conformed to the things of our present earthly experience.

We are now ready to measure the deeper reasons why God, in His mercy, has not told us of the life to come. For, had He willed us to know its details, He would have transcended all these difficulties which seem to us insuperable. It is not to logic, but to His love, that we must look for a satisfactory answer.

In the first place, then, we may ask ourselves whether, if we did know in full detail the glory and the opportunity of the future, we might not neglect the glory and the opportunity of this present world. Might we not fold our hands as we caught sight of the heavenly vision, saying, "This life here is so tame, so commonplace, compared with that life which is to be, that I shall do nothing here, awaiting the greatness of that life before really beginning to achieve"? That is a real danger.

An old saint, dying, said, "I am about to leave you, my beloved." "Yes," was the answer of courage, "but you will do for me greater things in that life to which you are going than ever you were able to do for me here." "I know," the saint replied, with a smile, "but the little things I did for you here I shall no longer be able to do." Of course the things she had done were not trifling; they were great, because fused with love. But they were small compared with the deeds which, she believed, would be given her to do. That was a revealing answer. Life is great beyond; but life here is also great. One of the compensations for the hard-won victories of earth will be the memory of them in heaven. As spirit meets spirit, not only will there be present the joy of the celestial, but there will be the repetition of the struggles and the conquests of earth. "Do you remember," a man may say to his wife, "how we met that black

day, and how, hand in hand, we faced its blackness, and by God's help came out in the light, through the patience and the effort and the courage which He gave to us?" Heaven will be less joyous if men, within its joy, cannot recall the victories they won on earth.

A story is told of the artist Turner, that one day he invited Charles Kingsley into his studio to see a picture of a storm at sea. Kingsley was rapt in admiration: "How did you do it, Turner?" he exclaimed. Turner answered: "I wished to paint a storm at sea, so I went to the coast of Holland, and engaged a fisherman to take me out in his boat in the next storm. The storm was brewing, and I went down to his boat and bade him bind me to its mast. Then he drove the boat out into the teeth of the storm. The storm was so furious that I longed to lie down in the bottom of the boat and allow it to blow over me. But I could not: I was bound to the mast. Not only did I see that storm

and feel it, but it blew itself into me, till I became part of the storm. And then I came back and painted that picture." Turner's experience is a parable of life. Life is sometimes cloud and sometimes sunshine; sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain; sometimes defeat, sometimes victory. Life is a great mingling of happiness and tragic storm. He who comes out of it rich in living is he who dares to accept it all, to face it all, to let it blow its power and its mystery and its tragedy into the inmost recesses of his soul. The victory, so won in this life, will then be an eternal possession. A loving God allows us to be absorbed in one life at a time, quite ignorant of what is ahead, lest we lose the glory which He provides for our enriching as we pass through it.

There is still one more reason why it seems to me that God in His utter love for us keeps back the knowledge of the future life: I think He wishes

us to trust Him for it. If you ask any father what most he cherishes in his child's life, he will answer that he values most the child's confidence in his loving care. That is an unnatural child who is always questioning his father's love; who does not venture to put his hand into his father's hand, quite sure that his father will lead him into what is best and happiest for him. Is it not rational to assume that the God who put that longing into a father's heart must Himself long for the trust of His human children? Once we grasp the meaning of Christ's revelation of the Father, it seems inevitable that God, showing us this unspeakable love through Christ, should desire our trust and our love in return. We may question why He could not have asked us to trust Him for something less than the infinite reaches of life, giving us knowledge only of the tiny span covered by our existence here. But to put such a question is to see

that we are begging Him to allow us to give Him some insignificant proof of our love. He asks us so to know His love that we shall be more than confident that He will exceed our fondest hope, our most ardent prayer, our wildest dream. We may gladly trust Him for the future, both for those who are dear to us as they pass into the unknown, and for ourselves as we approach the narrow gate. It will be His supreme surprise for us. And we shall please Him if we do not complain that the secret is strictly kept, if we do not pry and peep, if we do not, through uncanny attempts, enter into league with those who promise to show what Christ Himself has not shown. The most secure comfort in store for those who are troubled about the future is to rest in the protecting care of our most loving Father, God.

CHAPTER V

Intimations of Our Immortality

We are now ready to examine the grounds of our faith in immortality, for since God asks us to trust Him for the details of our future we must place it in the realm, not of knowledge, but of faith. In his address to the British Association at Oxford in the summer of 1926, Sir Oliver Lodge prophesied that immortality would sometime be brought within the bounds of scientific demonstration. That may be; but one cannot be sure that such demonstration would be of advantage to us. There are sound reasons why we might be glad to have immortality remain where it now is, in the region of faith. As we look back from that farther shore we may perhaps be thankful that we anticipated immortality, not as a proved

fact, but as God's loving surprise for us. That is, we may be glad that we accepted the fact as well as its content wholly as a gift from Him.

It is conceivable that if we had scientific demonstration of immortality we might receive it without thought of God, just as men, content with the compensation of this present world, think that they can now get on well enough without Him. To trust in immortality today means that you must gain a prior trust in God. And only as you discover for yourself the qualities which your observation and experience teach you to see and deduce, only as you contemplate the controlling Power in the universe, can you feel sure of the life which that Power shall grant to you after death. Consequently all the faith in the future life which you can achieve must come as a result of your faith in the Father of all life. "This is life eternal," prayed Jesus: "to know thee, the only true God." Im-

mortality without God would be worse than hell; immortality with God is highest heaven.

With this preliminary axiom in mind, let us sound the depths of our faith in immortality. Let us not desire or expect a hard and fast argument. Let us seek those intimations which our hearts, resting more and more in God's love, teach us to rely upon.

Our first intimation of the necessary idea of a future life comes in the presence of the death of a truly great man at the height of his power and influence. Again and again, through the centuries, a man to whom thousands look for inspiration falls by the wayside. An hour ago his eye flashed hope, his smile cheered, his word gave knowledge, his love gave confidence. He was like a dynamo, giving force to his whole wide environment as it lay about him. Then, a moment ago, without warning, he died. What has become of him? Can he have

become nothing? If we talk calmly of the conservation of energy in the physical world, can we fail to go one step farther and say a word of belief in the conservation of energy in the spiritual world? Is not such abounding life living somewhere, though its manifestation in this world has ceased? The wide-eyed disciples of Socrates, who knew the wisdom and love and strength of their master in that room in Athens where he drank the hemlock, and then saw him die, could not possibly believe that such wisdom and love and strength as his had stopped. A nation exulting in the great heart of Abraham Lincoln, which had by sheer strength and love and pity brought a warring people together and had won peace, received the sudden news that Abraham Lincoln had been fatally shot. Could anyone who had entered fully into the emotions of that hour believe for one instant that so mighty a personality could thus suddenly stop living?

Somewhere, all thinking men said to themselves, that heart of love and pity and infinite patience must be living still. In the days of my youth the commanding genius of that part of the world in which I lived was Phillips Brooks. He strode through the streets a giant; he gave new faith to people in secret one by one; he stood before the thousands and uttered such messages to men that we all said their ultimate source was God. Youth adored the power of God which they saw in his noble face and in his prophetic word; they looked to him to lead them whither he might tell them to go. The world was bright and firm in his presence. He was at the summit of his triumphant leadership—and then one Monday, with no word of warning whatever, we were told that he was dead. Do you suppose that any one of us who had looked up to him believed that he was gone for ever from life? Not one of us! I remember how we met one

another that January morning, spoke of our irreparable loss, and then added: "But such a life could not suddenly be snuffed out. He is alive somewhere in all his glorious strength."

A similar accession of faith in immortality came to us in the Great War. Millions of the bravest youth of the world died on the battlefields of that war of four short years. These youth had been the hope of their time. This world must for ever be poorer because they could not live on to old age and make their contribution to our civilisation. In one overwhelming hour of sacrifice for the sake of the race they went out. Whither did they go? It swept over us all in those dreadful years that it were impossible to think that such crowding ranks of life, so rich in possibility, so fit to live, could pass into nothingness. Instinctively we cried, "They must be living still!"

Even when we stand by the quiet

bedside of the inconspicuous life as it ebbs out, witnessing the fortitude and love, we cannot believe that death can touch more than the sheath which for a time has protected that radiant spirit.

This faith may be intangible. It may not be made the basis of an argument. But it seems valid to the man who has lived confidently in God's universe and has tried his best to spell out the character of God as it is revealed in nature, in science, in human relationships, in religious experience, in the whisperings of the still small Voice to the soul. Life in the best and truest men is so God-like that it must partake of God's eternal reality.

Another intimation which comes to us in moments of deep experience is involved in our definition of personality. Personality, we see increasingly, is relationship. No man lives to himself. John is himself, a tiny centre of life, *plus* his father, his

mother, his brothers, his sisters, his wife, his children, his teachers, his friends, his rulers, his subjects, his all-but-indifferent neighbours. You cannot know him without weighing the factors in his being which these so-called outside personalities contribute to his whole life. Strip them away from him and you have a frozen thing like an iceberg floating in a summer sea. He is, in a word, the sum of all these varied relationships. He lives in them; they live in him. There is no possible separation. As we watch this complex life of personality in the course of an earthly career, it becomes more and more difficult to believe that death confounds it. Through personality, the worlds here and beyond are in some mysterious way tied together. John and Mary, his wife, have lived in and through each other for forty years. Neither has moved without thought of the other. They have been one indeed. Now Mary has died. Our

inmost feeling tells us that with the centre of being which we call Mary there has passed to another life that part of John which was inextricably bound up in her; and when Mary seemed to pass out of this life she left in the centre of being, which we call John, a part of her very self. The relationship which made the united personality of this wedded pair has not been dissolved by death. Through Mary, Paradise lives in John on earth; and through John, the life of earth is hid with Mary in Paradise. Where love is, there is eternity, there is heaven. As personalities mingle to make life, so the world here and the world beyond mingle to make the life of humanity. When we look into the face of a loving man bereft of his wife, when we see there the glance which tells of sacred and everlasting remembrance, then we have before our eyes the proof to the human heart that

death is but a curtain and life lies behind it in all its fulness.

One more intimation of immortality I may mention. The vigour of life on earth is such that we must find ourselves convinced that it has an outlet. If it had no outlet, life here would become choked and heavy. It is no forced analogy to compare such a possible picture of life with the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea receives the waters of the Jordan, but it keeps those waters in its dreary basin, and only the sun takes them away by evaporation. And so that body is sterile, lifeless. I think, by way of contrast, of the five inland seas of North America. From the enormous body of water which we call Lake Superior, the living water is poured into sea after sea, through the rapids and the falls of Niagara, down through the rapids of the St. Lawrence, through a broadening stream till it reaches the wide Atlantic. You know the destiny of the waters of

Superior and Huron and Michigan and Erie and Ontario because their waters are alive. You know the hopelessness and limitation of the waters of that sea in Palestine because it is dead. When I see the sparkle and the endless hope, in spite of all adversity and calamity, in the countless generations of earth, I know that the waters of our life are not hemmed in by the earthly banks of time, but flow out through that narrow stream, between the rocks on either side, called death, through whatever course I know not, at last into the wide, sunlit sea, called eternal life.

Once more let me repeat, these are not arguments. Immortality is of faith, and arguments have nothing to do for us. We may look up, as it were, through His great ones, through human personality, through the teeming life of His universe into the loving face of God, and we may catch the assurance that all is well.

In one of his books Stevenson tells of a crashing storm at sea which was so deadly that the pilot had to be lashed to his wheel. One of the passengers, despairing of safety, crept up to the deck and tried to make his way towards the pilot. As he was about to give up all hope, the pilot turned to him and smiled. That smile assured him that the ship would weather the storm and would hold its own. There are great moments in this life when, about to give up all for lost and dreading a final ending, we turn our faces to God, and the Supreme Pilot of the mysterious world smiles back to us the assurance of unending life.

CHAPTER VI

The Assurance of Christ

Shakespeare wrote of

> The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns.

Shakespeare ignored the august traveller who did return, our Lord Jesus Christ. The evidence of His reappearance in this world after His crucifixion is proclaimed not only by adequate documentary witness, but more especially by the effect of His resurrection in history down to our own time. If His reappearance to various people at various times did not found the Christian Church, the Church has no explanation. And the undying life of the Christian Church is, all told, the most stupendous fact in the history of the last two thou-

sand years. It was not the languid creeping of an invalid from the tomb, in need of medical attention; it was not mere physical breathing restored which men saw in the risen Christ. It was a transfigured Christ, from whom the traces of the weakness of Good Friday had quite gone. He came with majesty and unique power. On Good Friday His followers were in despair. He and His cause had both utterly collapsed. There was no future for His Kingdom. The disciples were scattered and hopeless. Then within three days something happened which converted them from timid sheep fleeing before the storm into triumphant heroes. They were ready to withstand kings and their armies. Nothing could henceforth daunt them. They caught up the power of Christ's resurrection and with it transformed the world.

The effects of the work of Christ, it has been said, "are, even to the unbeliever, indisputable and histori-

cal. It expelled cruelty; it curbed passion; it branded suicide; it punished and repressed an execrable infanticide; it drove the shameless impurities of heathendom into a congenial darkness. There was hardly a class whose wrongs it did not remedy. It rescued the gladiator; it freed the slave; it protected the captive; it nursed the sick; it sheltered the orphan; it elevated the woman. It changed pity from a vice into a virtue. It ennobled labour from a vulgarity into a dignity. It sanctified marriage. It created the very conception of charity." This is a startling list, but it can be verified. I need not announce its author, for his testimony is echoed by many acute observers of history. The "work" of Christ was sealed by His resurrection. His resurrection crowned His life with power.

How does the resurrection of Christ affect the expectation of immortality for ourselves? Christ said

to His friends, "Because I live, ye shall live also." These friends, before they knew Him, believed in a continued existence after death. It was therefore not mere existence which He pledged to them, but life—life abundant, such life indeed as they had seen in Him.

Let us think, first, of His promise of their continued existence; and then let us weigh the quality of the life which they grew to expect, as the power of His resurrection was, day by day, revealed in their experience.

The Fourth Gospel records the words of Christ, "Because I live, ye shall live also." We are wont to say, and with good reason, that the report of Christ in the Fourth Gospel is less literal than in the Synoptic Gospels. The Fourth Gospel is like a great free portrait; the other Gospels are like photographs. But even if we had no report of these words in the Fourth Gospel the whole life of Jesus as recorded in all the records of the New

Testament would proclaim them. It was by His deeds, as well as His words, that He promised His followers that they would live with Him.

The invariable note of His graciousness to the world was that by His life on earth, from beginning to end, He identified Himself with the humanity which He came to serve and to save. Is any poor; so was He, cradled in a manger. Is any hungry; so was He, famished in the wilderness and refusing to turn the stones into bread. Is any lonely; so was He, forsaken by every friend in His hour of greatest need. Has any failed; He failed too, for He lost His dear friend Judas; even a Saviour's love could not hold him true. Does any suffer torture in the grim battle of life; He too was in agony as He hung on His cross, and He refused to accept the potion from a pitying soldier which might have deadened the pain. Does any watch his beloved weep and have no way of drying the

tears; He saw His mother weeping beneath His cross, and could not comfort her. Is any, at this moment, passing through the shadow of death; He too passed through the same gloom, a gloom so black that He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I find no part of His life in which He did not insist on identifying Himself with humanity.

That this self-identification with humanity was voluntary appears once we grant His miraculous power. Our definition of the miracle changes with the investigation of scholarship, and with our enlarging experience. Men who know life are less and less inclined to set the limits to what can be or cannot be in this world; and, on the other hand, men honest and clear-minded are less and less inclined to give cut and dried explanations of the facts in such a unique life as that of Jesus. Whether a miracle is supernatural power or is the use of natural laws which other

men have not yet learned to use, is indifferent to our purpose now. Quite obviously, every reader of the Gospels must see that Christ had extraordinary powers over humanity and over the nature in which humanity is set. We may, if we find it convenient for our prejudices, grant that this extraordinary power is entirely within laws which belong to all normal life, but are not understood, or used even unconsciously. We may say that some of the reported deeds are reported only in part, or not quite correctly, in spite of the clear honesty of the Evangelists, through attaching accidental concurrent events to the deeds of Christ. For example, we might conceivably suspect that the rushing of the swine into the water had no real connection with Christ's healing miracle which occurred at the same time. I am not speaking for or against such a theory. All I wish to make plain is that, when we find so much earnest

and painstakingly honest witness to the unique power of Christ, I find it impossible to think that there was not an entirely marvellous influence which He wielded over the life of His time. We see this notably in the efforts of His contemporaries to explain Him. Some said that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead; others, that He was the reincarnation of Elijah; others, that He was Jeremiah; and still others guessed other prophets. Clearly, when so many explanations were rife, the man about whom they clustered must have been extraordinary in His power. For these were men of extraordinary power with whom people sought to identify Him, and Elijah's name was particularly associated with miracles. For all these reasons and more besides we must believe that what we call Christ's miracles stand for something real in His career.

Now Christ exercised this power lavishly for others. He certainly

healed a multitude of their troubles—mental, moral, physical, and spiritual. Time and again His disciples must have wondered why, so far as we can see, He never used these miracles for His own benefit. When He was arrested in the Garden, He said to the impulsive and indignant Peter, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Have we not right, therefore, to say that Jesus deliberately identified Himself with the humanity as He found it in Palestine, giving to Himself not even the advantages which He freely gave to others?

There is one more consideration in this context which must not be overlooked. Not long ago all conservative theologians resented the idea that the knowledge of Jesus was limited. To be sure they had His own express word, recorded by St. Mark, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man,

no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son . . ." But it was abhorrent to think that His knowledge in other matters should have been limited. Now we find so cautious a theologian as Dr. Gore frankly saying that Christ's knowledge was the knowledge of His fellow-countrymen in the first century. Of course he discovers in this limitation a self-limitation; but the explanation is apart from the fact. I believe that most orthodox scholarship that deserves the name of scholarship now confesses that Christ's knowledge was limited. We may be glad to say that it was a self-limitation in the heart of the Divine, that even to this last degree Jesus should be identified with His human brethren.

Now how does all this affect the assurance of our immortality as related to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus? Just in this way: the loving Master, who identified Himself with

men's poverty and pain and failure and death, will not be content to be alone when He rises in His power. He who identified Himself with men's weakness will surely identify men with His strength. It is not necessary to postulate the alternative, but I dare to believe that Jesus would have remained dead had He not been able to carry with Him, through the gate of death, all who had died and all who shall die to the end of time. His love was no half-hearted love. It was love with infinite implications. Knowing Jesus as we find Him, either in history or in our own present experience, we must know that He cannot be in any state of existence to which He shall not admit us. His whole life assures us that, wherever He may be through the eternities, there He will always be preparing a place for us—for all of us.

The other thought that is implied in Christ's assurance of our continuance after death is that our life is to

be of the high, vibrating quality which men saw in Him. Men before His day believed in the continuance of life, but it was a dreary existence in the twilight. Christ brought immortality into the sunshine, and then endowed it with the serenity, the vigour, the joy which were evident in His days in Galilee. Men were singing in the synagogues at Nazareth and Capernaum, "Let me not go down into the pit"; or were reading Job's lament, "I shall go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Meantime Jesus was showing His neighbours what life could be, an inexhaustible power, over which death could have no dominion.

The life which Christ promises to the world is not only immortal; it reaches up and out into the glory and the bliss which human imagination

cannot dream. It is not mere life; it is life such as Simon Peter saw when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It is not the life of earth lengthened; it begins with the life of earth and then rises with Christ into the endless power, the endless joy.

In the beginning of this chapter I quoted Shakespeare. Characteristically, all through his poetry Shakespeare clings to a cautious agnosticism, dignified and reverent. Hamlet's soliloquy is perhaps his own summary of this mood. But, now and again, the poetic fire burns away the caution, as when he makes Ariel sing:

> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.

Shakespeare is surely thinking of rarer things than "coral" and "pearls." The life within is changing to surpassing beauty. Shelley too, calling himself an atheist, tried

to keep a philosophic indifference, but his faith on the wings of his poetry bore him upwards in spite of all. When his friend Keats died at twenty-five, Shelley not only felt the glorious boy to be alive, but to be alive with power. And so he sang:

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—

* * * * * *

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

* * * * * *

The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

But the two poets of the first cen-

tury, who stood close to the risen Christ, sing the truest confidence in the sublime quality of the new life. St. Paul sang:

> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
> Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
> Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors
> Through him that loved us.
> For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life,
> Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,
> Nor things present, nor things to come,
> Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,
> Shall be able to separate us from the love of God,
> Which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The other poet of the first century is the Great Unknown, the mystic author of the Fourth Gospel. His song outreaches the most ardent hope:

> Beloved, now are we the sons of God,
> And it doth not yet appear what we shall be:

But we know that, when he shall appear,
We shall be like him;
For we shall see him as he is.

Yes, it is not only life which is promised us, but such life that we shall be meet companions, friends, brothers of the most radiant Christ.

CHAPTER VII

Difficult Questions

Though we may not know the details of the life to come, there are certain insistent questions which men ask in the depth of their bereavement, and which may be answered by an appeal to the eternal qualities which we find in our life here.

One of these questions very commonly asked is this: "Shall I find in the other world the beloved saint who has just passed from this world? For this saint is so far above me in character and spiritual attainment," the questioner goes on to explain, "that never can I hope to catch up with him in the various stages of life which his valiant spirit shall successively climb."

The answer to that harrowing question is an appeal to the human

love which the questioner has known on earth. For that love is eternal. And the qualities which it has shown on earth, it must (with however many new qualities it may acquire) continue to display throughout eternity. Let us then ask a counter question: "Would this saint, when on earth, have remained happily isolated from the people he loved and the people who loved him? Can you imagine that he would not seek the beloved till he found them?" They could not go so far from him, either in space or in character, that he would not at last find them, and give himself to them. Love like that belongs to all the worlds; and it is unthinkable that, in any conceivable future, love shall not seek and find its own.

In the seventies a boy named Charley Ross was stolen from his home in Philadelphia. For years his parents sought him; and though they had large wealth, all of it was ex-

pended in the search; and they died, poor and broken-hearted, their child never having been found. The theory was that the criminals who stole him could not claim the reward because the lad had died, and to confess their crime would have been their own ruin. Quite easily we may picture the years of misery through which those parents passed. I cannot conceive that in the length of the eternal years love shall not discover its own; but if one can imagine such a tragedy, then the saint, after the vain search, will be in hell, for no torture of hell can surpass the unrequited search of love. If the saint is to have the reward of heaven, he must find his loved ones, whatever their rank in heavenly attainment.

Another desperate question is asked by the mother or the wife of some wreck of humanity, who is loved in spite of his villainy. Perhaps this wreck has died a drunkard's death; perhaps he has committed a das-

tardly crime; perhaps he has gone out of this life, like a coward, by his own act, leaving those who love him to unspeakable sorrow. This, then, is the question: "Can God forgive my dear one his sin? Is there any hope that he who has sunk so low can ever come into the fellowship of noble and happy spirits?"

Once more the answer is in terms of that immortal thing called human love. The grieving mother or wife, in order to find the answer to the riddle, need only think what she would do, if she could, for the beloved rascal. "Would you," one might ask, "have patience to keep on hoping for goodness to rise in that evil soul, though time after time your best efforts failed? Would you keep on, through countless years, to bring him into the light? Would you exhaust the whole treasury of your love to reclaim him? Would you, in spite of your love, endure to see him pass through dire punishment, if you be-

lieved that punishment would be remedial and, having taught its lesson, bring the draggled soul into the company of the respectable, and at last into the inheritance of the saints? Would you shrink from nothing, would your patience and your love endure till the victory was won?"

If the bereaved wife or mother can honestly say "Yes" to all these questions, then we may ask still another question: "Would your human love devise all these means for redemption, would your patience and your love endure to the end, and can you imagine for one dreary moment that God's love (of which your love is but as a spark from a central sun) will not outrun your human love by infinite distances?"

Too often theology, in attempting to make God's love tally with His justice, has subordinated the love to a vindictive righteousness. If the end of love rests in a cold mathematical

requirement to satisfy a Divine Dignity, then love itself suffers the loss of its highest attributes. Since Christ touched the leper, God's dignity has been transfigured by the light of an infinite love. It may well be that God will not, and therefore cannot, reclaim any lost soul except by the hot fires of suffering. Even our love here in this world, weak and inefficient as it often is, will not shrink from punishing a child if so the child may learn the highest wisdom and the ultimate happiness. That punishment is not given in despite of love, but because of it. Love always includes justice, because without justice love is flimsy and loses what most it cherishes. When we really think, we become aware that God will not admit all kinds of people to the same satisfactions when death closes this earthly scene. Love here, in trying to make all its guests happy, endeavours to bring together spirits congenial to one another. The

learned philosopher may be on a higher plane than the frivolous girl who has never thought of anything more interesting than a new frock or a certain delicacy of the table or the light and swirl of an evening dance; but you will not make that gay butterfly supremely happy by removing her from all her young companions and asking her to spend a whole evening listening to the great philosopher discourse on the unknowable, the thing-in-itself, and relativity. She may come to the day when she will find such conversation more exciting than the merriest party she ever shared in, but she must be prepared for such difficult and ethereal delights. If her nature is not simply innocent and free, but is bound in some invisible prisonhouse of sin, the training will involve hardship as well as diligence; and through the fires of suffering she must learn to be adequate to the highest and the best. That is not love which is soft and

proclaims that nothing matters because all will be made right in the end. Everything matters, and love must be put to infinite pains before all men may be saved. Heaven belongs to them all alike; but it must be prepared for before it is won.

We are trying hard in our present civilisation to make our prisons and gaols not places of punishment, but places of reform and redemption. God is surely putting that idea into men's hearts. We may confidently affirm that His love, though it may exact hardship for a season, possibly for a long season, uses that hardship only to teach, only to lead the sufferer through the discipline to the joy of heaven at last. If we ask that God do for our loved ones only what we should like to do for them if we could, we may rest in peace. He will do all that, every whit, and then so much more that we cannot possibly picture to ourselves what it shall be. Our

satisfaction and our consolation is in trusting His almighty love.

Another illustration of the same truth is seen in the treatment by a great novelist of the character whom he has come to love. This character does not sail a smooth voyage in a summer sea. He passes through the storms; he meets shipwreck and cruelty, but in the fires of affliction his soul is tempered and by the end of the book he is loved by the reader as well as by the author. He has won his saintship. Love, even in the work of imagination, if depicted by true genius, is as hard and as beautiful as burnished steel, and it is love always. Jean Valjean in the beginning of *Les Miserables* steals the silver candlesticks from the saintly bishop, but when the hero has passed through all his tragedies, made tender and strong by them, he is a greater saint than the old bishop—fit companion for the holiest. God has greater love for His erring chil-

dren than ever novelist has had for his most loved hero; and He may be trusted to bring His own into the gladness of the light.

One more hard question is asked in the presence of what we call untimely death. When a man has lived to the full, we may mourn his loss, but we feel that he has done his work and deserves his release into a world of larger opportunity. Even before he reaches his end, public opinion forces him to yield his place to a younger craftsman, that the oncoming generation may have its nurture in the school of responsibility. But when a youth, superbly equipped to live, falls out through a war, through an accident, or through some sudden acute illness, we are aghast. What, we murmur, can God mean by such ruthless sacrifice?

In a previous chapter I have spoken of God's economy; He surely will not suffer such preparation for life to be wasted. A man so fitted to

live shall receive life in abundance. But what special reason can we find for such a taking away? The answer appears in the supreme sacrific of Christ. Christ died as a young man. Critics have speculated what it would have meant for the world if Christ could have lived twice or even three times as long as He did live on this earth; and if, instead of from one to three years of public ministry, He might have had fifty. It is an alluring speculation. There would have been great gains for the world in such a long-continued influence of heaven's visibly touching the earth. But, on the other hand, an irreparable loss would have been the price of this long life. Christ died as a young man, because not for one moment would He compromise with the evil of the world. He knew that going up to Jerusalem in a certain springtime meant His death. Yet He set His face to go up to Jerusalem. Even after the conflicts of the last week

began He might easily have fled from His enemies. He was permitted each night to go out to Bethany with His disciples. Yet He returned that last fateful Thursday evening. He faced Judas, He faced the High Priest, He faced Pilate, He faced the angry mob, all unafraid. And He was crucified. That dying throws a halo about the head of every young man who meets death in the same heroic spirit. Old age is apt to be diplomatic, to make bargains with an evil world, to beat the devil around the bush; youth glories in a love of the ideal, despises half-measures, is not fearful of speaking the unwelcome, sharp-cutting truth, and is ready for the sacrifice. The hope of earth and heaven is in such bold risk for the sake of the exact truth, for the sake of the exact right.

After the late war many an American mother mourned the death of her boy with a peculiar agony, because

she thought he had been ruthlessly sacrificed. She asked why our fresh American soldiers were not warned by the French and English veterans not to go too impulsively into the battle. The war would have been won with a slower, steadier march against the German lines. We who were asked that question found it difficult to answer, till at last General Frederic Maurice wrote a consoling book for such mothers, explaining that it was just that reckless dash of the young Americans which warned Germany that further resistance was hopeless. When the other nations were worn out, American youth, fresh, well-trained, full of ardour, cared nothing for death, but threw themselves into the battle only with thought of victory. A less precipitous charge would not have served the same purpose. Those brave youth of the Argonne perished, but by their death they saved the world

a war which might have dragged on for months, and perhaps for years. They saved others untold distress and suffering by the quick, heedless sacrifice which they gave for the love of freedom. In a way less conspicuous, but quite as real, every bold, unselfish death of youth gives to the world the same impetus towards the clearer vision and the higher safety of the race.

The same question becomes a shade more difficult when it is applied to the death of little children. Here there has been no experiment with life. The child has barely begun his preparation. He may have escaped the failures and pitfalls and sins of youth and of maturity; but he has also lost the zest of the contest, the joy of victory, and the increasing knowledge of friendship and love. There is a deeper reason behind the mystery. We may only guess the true answer, but we have the duty

upon us to see if we can find it. This, then, would be my surmise. There is such spontaneous joy in the beauty of childhood that I think God must need the glory of perpetual childhood in heaven. John Bright was wont to say that, considering what beautiful creatures children were, he always wondered where all the queer old men came from. Heaven would not be heaven were there not children playing in its streets. Perhaps God allows parents to be bereft for a time so that, though all their other children grow up into men and women, one or two are taken quickly into the heavenly country, and there their loveliness and their innocence are gathered for the perpetual joy of the saints and heroes, and most of all for the mothers and fathers who shall possess these children as their pride for ever.

God's love is the one answer to all the dark questions men may ask; and,

if we shall look earnestly and long, out of that love we shall see the answer gleaming which shall satisfy our doubts and bring comfort to our troubled hearts.

CHAPTER VIII

God's Need of Our Immortality

Most of us think of immortality as a righteous compensation from God to us. Since God has put us into a difficult world, it seems only just that He should set us free of its difficulties at last; and in that freedom we include immortality. We seldom think of our immortality from God's point of view. In spite of the fact that half of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are for God, we pray almost exclusively for ourselves and our friends and relatives. When we say to the Father, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done," we are praying that God's plan may be fulfilled. That plan in its largeness all humanity together cannot even surmise; but every man may discover some fragment of it, partly through nature, but

more especially through a study of the revelation of God's Kingdom and will, as we perceive them in the life of Christ.

Let us then try to discover from these sources what God's plan is for humanity. We start with the belief that God is a God of love. God is love in Himself, apart from His world. God created and creates mankind. We ask why He created men, and there is but one possible answer: God wishes a wider field for the exercise of His love. In His limitless universe there may be myriads of His creatures, of all ranks and kinds. They also must be for His love. But love is not content merely to give love; it inevitably seeks the return of love from the beloved. So God gives humanity freedom. We may be righteous, do the things that please Him, and give Him our utmost love; or we may be bad, do the things that grieve Him, and reject His companionship. When Christ came to

men, men knew how much God loved them, and how completely He longed for men's righteousness and love in return. Plainly, therefore, God's plan for humanity is that all men shall be saved; that is, shall enter into the joy and peace and love of His friendship. We see in this plan the bounds of His Kingdom, the light of His will.

Jesus Christ laid down certain principles by which men should enter this Kingdom and so become the friends of God. We find these principles all through the Gospels, nowhere more clearly than in the chapters which we call the Sermon on the Mount. There we have the command not to be censorious, not to judge; not to think at all about food and raiment, letting those material things care for themselves, while we devote ourselves to the really important things in life; not only to forgive our enemies, but to love them; and to be perfect as our Father in heaven

is perfect. These commands have been ringing in the ears of Christian men for nearly two thousand years, and what is the result? Christianity has gained great victories, but thus far its adherents have failed to live it completely. Commanded not to judge, to let the wheat and the tares grow together till the harvest, the Church has had its Spanish Inquisition, its persecution of so-called witches at Salem, its trials for heresy, its ostracisms, and its cruel pharisaism. Commanded not to spend our time in thinking about our bodies, most of us think of little else. To keep physically well, to be fed, and to be decently clothed is practically the whole duty of man. Commanded to love our enemies, we have gone on making devastating wars, and the most hateful of all was in our own time. Commanded to be perfect, we have so besmirched our civilisation that we wonder whether we can ever be perfect.

These commands stand out clearly; many have honestly tried to obey them. The inescapable conviction comes to us that, in our life on earth, these principles will never fully be obeyed. If that be so, and if the coming of God's Kingdom depends on their fulfilment in life, then either God's Kingdom will never come, or there must be a life of freer air and larger opportunity beyond. That means that, if our prayer for God's plan for us is to be answered, God must have immortality for men that they may attain His will for them. For the perfection of humanity, this world is not enough. God, for His own sake, demands our immortality. For God's plan cannot and must not fail.

We recognise how much God cares for our perfection as we listen to our Lord when He tells the people His parables. The parable of the Lost Sheep is eloquent testimony to the extent of God's search for the way-

ward and the disobedient. If all men are saved but one, God has failed. The larger hope (by which we mean our trust that every man shall at last be brought into the light of God's loving companionship) is not a hope for man's victory, so much as it is a hope for God's victory. The attempt to limit God's search for the lost sheep to this world is a travesty upon God's love. Jesus was telling men an eternal characteristic of God's love when He told this parable. It may be that one man, or many men, will elude the divine search. But the love which men saw in Christ's sacrifice for them on Calvary is an eternal love, and a search quite as thorough as that will be exerted eternally till all are won to that love. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; that is, God's loving search for the lost sheep is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. So far as we can reasonably see, this life is not sufficient for God's victory. There-

fore God must have our immortality.

Nor is it only imperfection that requires immortality to turn it into perfection, to bring all humanity perfect before the loving Father. Quite as much the incompleteness of human life requires immortality, that the fineness won in the human span may be made complete for God's loving joy. Seven million men are said to have perished in the late war. Many of these were youths who had been trained with the utmost love in Christian homes, then had passed through the intellectual and spiritual drill of school and college, and finally had met a great sacrificial summons. They had won knowledge and moral strength and spiritual poise. They were astonishingly well prepared for life. Then they were cut off. Can you think that the God who is known to us in the natural world will allow such waste of preparation?

Even more you may contemplate the man who has had his full oppor-

tunity in this world. He has had the training of our soldiers who died ten years ago for love of freedom, and he has used that training in a life of heroic labour and sacrifice. He has been one of the lights of his generation. Even in spite of the victory which you say that he has made of his life here, there is tragedy in his departure. He may be physically weary and worn; he may be quite glad to leave his physical infirmities behind. But when you look into his beautiful face, when you see the riches of the character behind that face, when you dream what such a man might do for the next generation could he only have the physical strength to support the moral, mental, and spiritual acquirement which he has won, then you must ask yourself whether God, for His own sake, can allow such waste of the highest kind of human power. For such a man, rounding out his three

score years and ten, is fitted to live and help, as never before. From a candid view of God's workmanship in the wide world of nature, I feel that we must say that to God such waste must be impossible. So again, the immortality of men becomes to Him a necessity.

Men sometimes talk of God's waste in nature. They will speak of the thousands of acorns which are grown, of which only a few become trees in their turn. Lo, what reckless waste God allows in His universe! But this is only ignorance of the manifold ways of God's use of acorns. Fabre once made a reverent study of acorns to see just how they were used. A few became sturdy trees. Others, while they were still on the tree, were entered by a tiny worm, which bored its way from the end of the acorn into its cup and there laid its egg. In due time the egg came to life and lived for a time on the soft meat in

the cup, and then ate the tiny shavings which the mother had made as it came through the bore. At last the acorn fell to the ground, and the tiny being went out into the earth. The elephant beetles which resulted from the food of these acorns is the favourite food of some of the sweetest song birds of France. The farmer gathers up all the acorns which he can find and gives them to his pigs—and so, said Fabre, we have the most delicious bacon of France. Other acorns lie upon the ground till their richness makes the woodland fertile with their strength. And so Fabre proved to himself that not one acorn was wasted. It is legitimate to think that, were observers as keen as Fabre to study any of the so-called waste of the universe, they would find that in God's marvellous economy not one atom of life is ever allowed to go to waste. In some way He uses it all. "If God so clothe the grass of the

field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Incidentally, we see how God must expect us to begin tasks here which may seem to us beyond fulfilment in our own lifetime, in our century, or possibly in all human earthly history. I have heard a man say that he never began a task which he was not quite sure that he could complete in a few years. Intensely practical, this man has taken up one valuable task after another, and he is now, an old man, gloating over his accomplishments in life. He has won a good many victories and folded them up in napkins as his treasure. That sort of life is useful, but it misses greatness.

There is a large and costly volume in vellum in the archives of the archbishopric of Canterbury, which, in his diary, Archbishop Laud recorded that he had compiled. It was, he said, one among the "twenty-one things which I have projected to do if God

bless me in them." To fifteen of these little tasks he was able, before his fall, to add his emphatic "done." Let there be no tasks for him which he could not finish in his lifetime!

The truly great life catches at the dreams which God puts into human hearts, though men say that they are impossible of fulfilment. Such a life gives all its energy and devotion to the building of that dream into reality. As the man dies he commits his work to some eager youth, who sees that the vision is from God. He too toils arduously and gaily, and passes on the task to one of the best of the next generation. So, through the ages, the increasing purpose runs—and is still unfinished. Eternity may be needed for its final victory; so eternity must be given for it. God will not allow His heroes to fail for lack of immortality.

It is good to contemplate some of these ambitious dreams. Certainly one is Church unity. The worldly

wise explain that Church unity is wholly impossible; they declare that men never will give up their prejudices and their preferences and that it is a waste of time to enter upon an enterprise so chimerical. When the Lord Christ, however, prayed to His Father that all His followers might be one, Church unity became one of the dreams of men sent from God. It is not our responsibility how or when the dream shall come true: God will care for that. But it is indeed our duty to dream and pray and work with full confidence that our effort will count, by God's mercy, towards the glorious ending.

The unity of the world is another dream which the prudent call fatuous. Hitherto nations have had no compunctions in stealing their freedom from lesser groups of people, or in contending for mastery among their equals. So wars have abounded, and the doubtful euphemism of the "white man's burden" has cloaked

many a conquest of human liberty. Such international selfishness must always abound, we are told, in human history. But Christ's prayer for unity means, say the daring and the faithful, more than ecclesiastical peace: it means the unity in all life of all who look to Him as the Elder Brother of mankind. In Him and His love, wars must be eschewed, and peace on earth to men of good will must come. The time when this consummation is reached may be ages or eternities hence, but it shall be reached; and the men who begin the task shall see in the end of all things that their toil has helped to bring in the blessed day.

Though I should not be baffled if the ending lingered, I have a fond hope that in our life here, perhaps even in this very century, Church unity and world peace may come. But there is one dream for which in this life I see no rational hope; and

that is the perfection of human character. It has been one of the marks of the saints in all ages that they accused themselves of faults which lesser men would have excused. They have had bitter consciousness of sin. No man but Christ the Lord has ever in this life attained perfection, for He exceeded all sainthood in that He had no consciousness of sin. But if we are to wake up in the likeness of Christ, we have full right to dream that men shall at last be perfect. I can see no hope that men shall be perfect in the conditions of this present existence; but I do believe that God shall win His perfect friends at last. For an end inconceivably distant the man who would bound his achievement by this life would certainly not deign to waste his time. For the man who ventures upon tasks given by the Son of God, it is natural that he should spend all for an end which shall only come in eternity. He

is among the great ones of earth and heaven,

> that did their deed
> And scorned to blot it with a name.

These tasks which exceed the limits of earthly lives or of all earthly existence are in themselves the promise of immortality. They are part of the Kingdom and will of God for which Christ's men have prayed and will always pray. God, for His own sake, will provide immortality, that those heroes and saints in whom He has begun a work great and good may bring it to perfection. Little tasks done and completed in this life lay no claims upon immortality. The men who dare what their neighbours call the impossible are the men who make immortality an easy and necessary gift from God. Thus immortality becomes not so much a boon for men, disappointed with the brevity of human life, as a satisfaction and an honour for God Himself. The answer to the Lord's Prayer is

coming true. Men are not content with their own visions, but, looking up into the face of the Father, are, little by little, stroke by stroke, bringing in the Kingdom of God, and God's will is being done on earth as it is in heaven.

CHAPTER IX

God's Sympathy

When a man first enters the darkness of a major sorrow he sometimes doubts everything. He may even say that there is no God; or he may cry in his misery that God is dead to him and does not care what befalls him. But such a man must in some way find sympathy. Self-pity does not help. His own thoughts mock him. He cannot bear himself up. He must secure aid from without himself. So he turns to old friends. Their understanding, their love, does comfort him; but their best is not enough in this hour of sorest need. If the finest and truest of earth are not sufficient, he must go beyond humanity. And so he tries God. And, to his wonder and amazement, he finds that God is waiting for him, longing to have His

child turn to Him. He discovers that God is; that He cares; that He pours into the aching heart more sympathy than any human need has ever been able to measure.

Many a man in a grievous sorrow first discovers God. If he had thought about God at all, it was only to think of a gigantic Force, making the universe, controlling it, carrying it forward to some inscrutable destiny, too absorbed in the grandeur of His being and enterprise to notice the tiny creature called man. Man still is tiny, but his need seems infinite, and into that infinite need comes the Infinite Father, to fill every nook and cranny.

A number of years ago a friend lost by death his little child. I did not see how he could go on living without that bright presence, for the child was all-in-all to him. We met a few days later and we tried to talk of other matters. There came a light into his face such as I had never seen

before, and suddenly he broke off our conversation, exclaiming, "I never loved God as I do now!" Instantly I knew the process. He had not been able to help himself; none that he counted dearest on earth could help him sufficiently; so perforce he had turned to God, and, as for the first time, he had discovered God—God knowing his trouble, God caring, God understanding him, God loving him. Sorrow is a steep, rough road, but again and again it leads to the very heart of God.

We sometimes gain a clearer idea of a truth which applies to an individual by examining the same idea when it applies to a group or to a whole nation. In the recorded years of the history of the Hebrew people, the most sorrowful period was the period of the Captivity. Jerusalem had been taken by the enemy; the Temple was destroyed; the walls were torn down; and many of the people were carried off to Babylon

as captives. For seventy years they and their descendants remained in Babylon. No death could have been so profound a grief to those exiles as the loss of their Temple and the Holy City. In making their journey to the eastward they felt that they were for ever taken away from the presence of God. They had associated God's presence with the Holy of Holies on Mount Sion. Now the Temple was desecrated, ruined, deserted. Their own death they would have preferred to the death of all they held most sacred. God was far from them, and they were in despair. They were in the depths of hell. We perceive the blackness of their hate and their distress in the song which has survived through the centuries:

By the waters of Babylon,
We sat down and wept,
When we remembered thee, O Sion.
As for our harps, we hanged them up
Upon the trees that are therein.
For they that led us away captive,
Required of us then a song,
And melody in our heaviness, saying,

Sing us one of the songs of Sion.
How shall we sing the Lord's Song
In a strange land? . . .
O daughter of Babylon, wasted with misery:
Yea, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee
As thou has served us.
Blessed shall he be that taketh thy children
And throweth them against the stones.

Nothing but the most bitter grief could speak such biting vengeance. These people of the Captivity were indeed in hell.

Then the wonder of wonders came. In the thickest darkness of their tribulation, God gave the light of His presence as never before in all their history. One poet sang:

Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord:
Lord, hear my voice . . . .
For there is mercy with thee:
Therefore shalt thou be feared. . . .
My soul fleeth unto the Lord before the morning watch:
I say before the morning watch.
O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy:
And with him is plenteous redemption.

And another poet, in his ecstasy of discovery, sang:

> I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills:
> From whence cometh my help?
> My help cometh from the Lord,
> Who hath made heaven and earth. . . .
> The Lord shall preserve thee from
> all evil;
> Yea, it is even he that shall keep
> thy soul.
> The Lord shall preserve thy going
> out and thy coming in,
> From this time forth for evermore.

In this same period of lowest sorrow turned into highest joy, the great Unknown Prophet spoke his words of triumph:

> Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished. . . . The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. . . . Get

> thee up into the high mountain. . . . Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! . . . He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

The most sublime passages of the Old Testament are the words which came out of the sorrow of the Captivity, a bereavement beyond the death of husband or wife, of father or mother, of sister or brother, or even of the first-born child. God's loving sympathy broke through the reserve of the Hebrew awe of His perfect and unapproachable majesty. For them God was no longer shut up in the heavens; not even was He enclosed in the Holy of Holies. God was suddenly revealed as the companion of the humblest of them in all their confusion and commonplaceness:

O Lord, thou hast searched me out
and known me.
Thou knowest my down-sitting, and
mine up-rising. . . .
Thou art about my path, and about
my bed,
And spiest out all my ways. . . .
Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I go then from thy
presence?
If I climb up into heaven, thou art
there:
If I go down to hell, thou art there
also.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And remain in the uttermost parts
of the sea;
Even there also shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me. . . .
O Lead me in the way everlasting!

The poets and prophets of the Old Testament, finding that God showed sympathy with the bereavement of a nation, discovered also that God showed a like sympathy with the individual in his personal sorrow. Therefore we have the superb epic of Job. In this dramatic poem we have the picture of a man who passes through every phase of human trouble. Flocks and houses and servants

and children, all were destroyed. Yet Job refused to curse his Maker:

> Naked came I out of my mother's womb:
> And naked shall I return thither:
> The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;
> Blessed be the name of the Lord.

From the natural interpretation of this sentence, God might still be thought to be far away, in spite of Job's loyal devotion to Him; it might be only Job's loyalty to a distant King. Then as the sorrows ate into his soul Job appreciated that he was not alone in his suffering. God's pity and love and compassion were all about him, and so we hear Job say the words which stand forever among the greatest words in any language:

> Though he slay me.
> Yet will I trust in him.

God is no longer far from him. Job had become intimate with God. He is poor, bereaved, wracked with physical pain, but God is with him.

So we reach the climax of the story in Job's final answer to God's reasoning with him:

> I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
> But now mine eye seeth thee.

The poet made a flat ending of his epic when he restored Job's worldly prosperity. Having found God, Job had reached the Kingdom of Heaven. Nothing could be better than that.

This mood of human experience in the Hebrew Captivity and in Job is reflected all through literature. It would be easy to quote modern instances, independent of this symbol. But, when the world finds a classic example, it prefers to pour its life into that approved mould, feeling that so it tells a truer story of reality than if it tried to find new words for its experience. So the Psalms of Exilic and Post-Exilic Israel and the Book of Job have been echoed, through subsequent history, in the moments of men's sorrow. In his *Psalms in*

Human Life, Mr. Prothero has collected the verses from the Book of Psalms which have been quoted by men and women in their tragedies, so far as literature has recorded them. He makes an imposing volume of these quotations. When, in addition to these, we reflect upon the multitude of men and women whose names have never attained the printed page, and who have repeated the exultant surprise of the Captivity, making these Bible phrases their own by freighting them with their own suffering and their own release, we marvel at the probably vast endorsement of this most eloquent record of God's sympathy for human woe.

A distinguished modern philosopher, after passing through his time of trial, wrote in an illuminating passage that often, when a man felt that there was none to hear, he would cry out from the depths. And out of the unknown came an answer, an

answer of intimate sympathy and consolation. Wherefore, this philosopher went on to say, God for many men is to be defined as the Being who hears the cry from the depths. This is just another way of saying that in the greatest sorrows of life men can and do discover God as for the first time. He becomes real to them. They know that He cares.

There is one aspect of this revelation of God's loving sympathy which is of marked importance in a time when a few learned men—like Sir Oliver Lodge, for example—are urging the bereaved to turn to spiritualism as a comfort in their distress. That means the turning of the weary soul to a "medium" who professes to have some vague access to the vanished spirit for whom the sufferer is mourning. In another place in this book I have tried to show that the surest comfort does not lie in this direction. Now I wish to go a step farther. If one desires a "medium"

between oneself and the vanished spirit, there is indeed a medium who will carry and receive in return all the messages that are given. That "medium" is God. Through prayer we have access to our beloved. If they have prayed for us on earth, they certainly speak to God about us now; just as we, when we kneel in confidence before God, cannot forget them, or fail to speak our love for them. Prayer is man's consolation in all the emergencies of life, but at no time is prayer a surer solace than in time of sorrow. For in that exalted moment when we realize to ourselves God's presence, we know that we meet all who would lose themselves in Him, whether they are alive on this earth, whether they passed through the vale of death into His more vivid presence only last week, or whether they have been away from the world as we know it for a thousand years. In Him, consciously, trustingly, lovingly approached, all

who love one another are most intimately together; they are alive with everlasting life, because they share together the life of the almighty and most loving Father. It is often sorrow which starts men to pray; or, if they for any reason have ceased to pray, to pray anew. And as they pray they do not always send words or even thoughts to heaven. They kneel in the silence; and through the mystery and the stillness God speaks to the inmost heart. He tells the wounded soul that He knows all, that He cares as no human father ever can care, that He sympathizes with the pain and the grief; and then He reveals the love of the vanished one which has been revealed to Him through the prayer of the beloved; and so the perfect union of spirit with spirit is accomplished. It is all natural, simple, reassuring.

Once more, sorrow is a steep and rough path, but it may always, if we will permit it, lead us to the very

heart of the loving God, and incidentally to the heart of that beloved spirit for whom we suffer our loneliness. We discover God, and in Him is the glory of our peace.

CHAPTER X

Power Through Sorrow to Help Others

One of the passions of good men is to help other people. They are eager to help the unfortunate and the poor; their hearts go out to little children in need; they are attentive to efficient schools, sanitation in the poorer sections of cities, adequate housing for everybody. When they have done their utmost for these various causes they see that they have touched only the fringe of life. They may have reduced poverty to a vanishing point; they may have increased the beauty and the comfort of homes; they may have provided excellent education for all the children of the land. Yet many people may still be unhappy; others may be vicious—their education providing

fuel for their villainy. The well-wishers for humanity must help the interior of life, and not its circumference only. They must, if possible, help in times of great trouble, whether the trouble be physical pain, complete failure in life, or bereavement.

There are some benevolent people who find themselves unable to help in the places where the need is most severe. A few even seem to have escaped all great sorrows, and others have been so comfortable and complacent that, when sorrow came to them, they were able to ignore its pangs. These people see their neighbours writhing in agony when their dark day comes, but they have no consolation to offer. They long to help, but they are like Domenichino's picture in which an angel is seen touching the points of the thorns in the Saviour's crown. There is only wonder in the eyes of the angel; not being human, and so being incapable

of human suffering, the angel does not comprehend what the Saviour's pain must have been. There is no understanding of it, no sympathy for it. Some men are like that angel. Either because they have never known crushing bereavement or because it has passed over them, leaving them unhurt, they do not know what real suffering is; and they cannot help. Their friends instinctively recognize that they cannot help and never think of turning to them in the hour of need. They go to them for advice about investments, for sound counsel as to where to send a boy to school, for practical sense in a difficult moral problem; but when men must have the highest and the deepest and the best, they must turn their sad faces to others.

I remember years ago hearing a father who had lost his only son telling me about his drive from the church to the grave with a clergyman. The clergyman was a prosper-

ous man of the world whom the harsh experiences of life had never touched. He had become a clergyman because he genuinely wished to help. He rode with the bereaved father on that short, agonizing journey, hoping that he might really help him. But all the words he wished to say sounded in his thoughts hollow; they were outward, not tested by experience, theoretic. And so he sat dumb, while hungry eyes looked into his, expecting some word, however halting and broken it might be. At last, in despair, the clergyman cried: "I cannot help you. Oh, if only my old rector were here! He would say the word which would go to the heart of your trouble! As for me, I do not know. I do not understand." And so the weary eyes looked out of the window, the bereaved father feeling that he must carry his burden alone: there was no one near to share it with him.

The story is told of Phillips Brooks that one day there came to him a

child who stuttered pitifully. The small boy explained that he had heard that Phillips Brooks had stuttered when he was a boy, so he had come to the great man to learn how he had conquered his affliction. "Alas!" said Phillips Brooks. "I never stuttered, so I cannot help you." As he looked down into the troubled face of the child, as he saw the last traces of hope fade away, he wished that he had stuttered; for his whole heart went out to the boy, and he longed, with all that loving heart, to lift him out of his distress. I believe that the desire to help humanity may become so intense that, when a man has lived a life without thick clouds or raging storms, and when that man faces a human need in its direst form, he will wish that he had known the worst, that now, out of full comprehension, he might ease the overwhelming burden which rests upon his neighbour's soul.

When sorrow comes to you, there-

fore, you may have this among other thoughts to console you. You may say: "Now God is going to take me through the depths of life. Other people have passed the same dark way; and myriads will follow us. Through God's mercy I must use this suffering for high ends. If, without trying to dodge it or cover it up or explain it away, I frankly accept it, if I let it pierce me through and through, then men will be fully aware that, when sorrow befalls them, I do understand it. And they will turn to me, and I can help them. Deep never calls to the shallows of life. But deep does call to deep. Let my love be sufficient; that I may use my sorrow for love of others!"

Perhaps the best illustration of this truth in all literature is the life of Sir Walter Scott. Walter Scott, as a boy and young man, absorbed the romance of the past history of his country. He could not be the lawyer he was expected to be because he

must give himself wholly to the charm and the witchery of mediaeval Scotland and England. He had one ambition, and that was to found a great family and a great estate. So he turned the huge profits which came to him from the publishers for his poems of the Border into the creation of Abbotsford. He was not getting rich fast enough for his purpose; and accordingly anticipated the profits from books not yet written, and, further, himself entered the publishing business. He was prosperous, gay, chivalrous, beloved by all who knew him. But there was nothing in him of the deeper notes of life. He was honourable and kind, but he was a worldling, his heart set upon a worldly ambition only. Then came the crash. His colleagues in publishing were not capable, and the company failed for an enormous sum. Walter Scott could have avoided the responsibility for the failure, but he accepted it as his own in the name

of honour. So he set to work, fast and furiously, to write the Waverly Novels. They sold in unprecedented quantities. The money rolled in. The debt was each year diminished. It was not quite paid when he died, but the royalties of his books paid it fully after his death. Missing his goal, bereaved, sad, he went to his grave in gloom; but he had won a noble triumph.

Sir Walter did not found a great family. His worldly ambition was frustrated. But, when his trouble smote him, he entered a new phase of life—deeper, finer, greater. His son-in-law, Lockhart, wrote the story of his life, telling the whole thrilling tale of his strict honour. In many ways it is the best biography ever written, and in any case it must stand beside Boswell's Johnson as on the highest level of the art. Without doubt the depths which Sir Walter sounded have made him an inspiration and a comfort to others in simi-

lar trouble. Others have caught his courage, his honour, his faith, and have transcended their sorrow and their trouble, thereby turning defeat into everlasting victory.

I cannot forbear to give my own immediate testimony. I have, as a pastor of one flock after another during the last thirty years and more, known intimately those who have passed through the various experiences of life, from serene safety in the quiet harbours out into the raging storms of suffering and sorrow and death. It has been my duty to observe the changes and the growth of the human soul through these vicissitudes. Again and again I have seen, in the hour of woe, the souls of men and women arise from a life of selfishness and complacency and worldliness into a life of self-sacrifice, the giving of the whole self for others. A beauty and a radiance have come into faces which had not been

there before. Below the kindness and the unselfishness there was always the lingering, unforgetting sorrow, but it was sorrow transcended, transmuted into something "rich and strange." People in trouble, and particularly youth in trouble, turned to these deep natures made kind and beautiful, and invariably found the help they longed for and feared they could not find. And so there was compensation for the suffering, a new sort of joy which was foreign to anything known in the gay past, a joy which was bought at the heavy price of sorrow.

People do not compare and weigh when they come into the profounder parts of life, but if they tried to make such comparisons and weigh the different values, I suspect that they would venture to say that perhaps the power to help in the hard places was worth the suffering which they had gone through; for nothing lighter or

easier would have fitted them for this final and greatest ministry to the human heart and the human soul. When love reaches its goal, it counts everything that contributes to that achievement an asset in life, and the man who loves to the end is ready to thank God for the power, however that power is given. The man who knows that he has the power looks down with a fierce contempt upon the easy years when his barns were bursting with plenty, when he had every luxury at his door, when all he loved were seated around his heavily laden table. The ease, the freedom from worry, the exemption from human sorrow, now seem cheap. He was then in the lower grades of the school of life. He really did not know life at all. Now he has been burned as by fire; his soul is branded with hot irons; he has lived through sorrow, and he knows. Henceforth he is as the shadow of the great rock

in a weary land. Men shall flee to him for peace. And in his understanding and his love they shall find it. And through it they shall be led to find the peace beyond understanding, the peace of God Himself.

CHAPTER XI

Sharing the Cross with Christ

One of the most arresting facts associated with the cross of Christ is that it was voluntary. "No man," said Jesus, "taketh my life; I lay it down of myself." We often think that to take up a cross is merely to meet bravely the tragedies which touch one's path. And so we sometimes think that Christ met His cross only because he became involved, in one chance fray after another, with the suspicious authorities of His nation, till He was snared, and taken, and condemned, and killed. The more closely we study His life, however, the more convinced we must be that a deliberate purpose controlled Him from beginning to end; and from this purpose He never swerved, whatever the risk. He clearly foresaw the

consequences, but not once did He flinch. The duty of pursuing His purpose was paramount, and the cross was inevitable.

The purpose which dominated His life was to show to men the character of God. Through nations God had revealed Himself in large measure. The Greeks knew Him as Perfect Beauty; the Romans knew Him as Law and Order; the Hebrews knew Him as Absolute Righteousness. In the life of Jesus men were to see these revelations endorsed, and then a new element was to be added, transfusing and transfiguring all the rest; in Him men were to know that God is the God of love. To reveal God's love in human life meant love to the end, and that spelled death for the Lover. Jesus Himself declared, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." So death was His choice, hideous, repulsive death, that He might completely live out the love of

His father in the life of human terms. It was not a demonstration, an example of fortitude; it was the necessity of His nature, that He might be completely what He planned to be, Love.

How, you will ask, can we follow an example so unapproachable as that? How can each of us take up his cross and follow after this supreme Master? How can we share with Him His cross? These are hard questions, but we may hope to find an answer to them.

First of all, we should accustom ourselves to seeing our life whole. We often think of it as a series of fragments. Its various episodes seem thrust upon us, and all we can do is to meet our joys with humility, our sorrows with patience. There is much of our experience which is beyond our control, but there is also much which we can guide; and even that which we cannot control we may fill with such meaning and purpose

that our life will find its unity, and that unity will be of our own choosing.

> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced nor cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed.
>
> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments
> the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate;
> I am the captain of my soul.

No man can set for himself a goal in life which is at all worthy, without finding, if he is loyal to his purpose and his ideal, that he inevitably must meet sorrow. Many are the ways of escaping the sorrow; but in escaping it, men also, at exactly the same moment, desert their purpose. Think of some of these purposes which befit human life. One of them is the search of exact truth in some department of learning or experiment or investigation. When a man goes, heart and soul, into such an adventure, provided he have the genius of

a pioneer and a discoverer, he will soon find himself called ugly names by the orthodox leaders of the passing generation. These bold advocates of the truth are no longer cast into prison or burned at the stake, but there are various forms of persecution and of ostracism which are quite the equivalent of heavy chains and burning faggots. The man loyal to the white truth, unwilling to make compromises with prejudice and blind reaction, will find sorrow straight across his path as he climbs upwards. He will be called on to share the cross of Christ.

Another purpose which inspires the life of many a mother is to send her son unspotted by sin or compromise into the next generation. There is no greater vocation known to the world than hers. She seems to have a secluded life, free from the common anxieties that beset men in the thick of the fight. She does her best by precept and example. She sends her

boy at length to school and college. War in some form comes before youth is over. The most dangerous and deadly wars are the wars which are masked and unrecognized. She has taught her boy that whenever there is a good war at hand he must go to it, and give himself completely for it. Much of his life after his early childhood is out of her sight. But he is never out of her mind and heart. She is always longing for him, praying for him. When they meet, she puts aside her fears. She dons her bravest smile and makes sure that any daring adventure which has appealed to him shall be reinforced by her sympathy and her coöperation. Her woman's instinct foresees the trial, the danger, the death. But she never wavers. It is possible for a mother to be a craven and to impart her cowardice to her son; and accordingly he may run from his battle, whatever form it may take, and go down in the dust to ignoble defeat.

That temptation comes to every mother. Many and many a mother conquers it. When youth fights the battles of the world, it is the mothers who should be thanked for the victory. The heavy cross of anxiety and sorrow which these mothers carry is the price of that triumph. They have full share in the cross of Christ.

Still another purpose which fires men and women of the finest temper is the result of what is commonly called the missionary spirit. We see it in heroes like St. Paul, in Boniface, in Xavier, in Livingstone. Some men will risk the cold of Alaska for gain of gold; others will risk the dangers of darkest Africa for gain of diamonds; others will risk the heat of the tropics for gain of hidden wealth. The world does not call that bold venture heroism; it is fraught with selfishness and worldly ambition. But when men risk all the dangers here involved for the sake of bringing Christ near to human souls who

otherwise might never know even His name, then the world rises to honour true followers of Christ who indeed do bear His cross after Him. These men are so consumed with desire to bring happiness, and the highest happiness, to their fellows, that they face every hardship, every sorrow, for the sake of the joy that is set before them, the joy of seeing the light of Christ shine in strange faces through their gift of themselves. We who remain at home and see the enthusiasts set sail for the distant continent, not to return for four or five years, fancy that they are so rapt in their mission that they do not feel the least pang in their separation from all that has been familiar to them, little dreaming that at this moment their hearts may be well-nigh breaking because they believe that quite probably they shall not see again the mother or sister from whom they are now so gallantly parting. Very close to Christ these

men and women pass down the way of the cross. Deliberately they accept their sorrow; most surely do they share His cross.

I cherish the remembrance of the only time I ever saw the great modern scholar, Sir George Adam Smith. It was during the war, and he had just lost a son in battle. He spoke of the millions of young men who had died for the civilization in which we all shared; how men who created the conditions were as spectators, and the young men paid the price with their lives. Then he went on to say that their dying was a perfect example of vicarious sacrifice. And that brought them to the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. So when men were finding difficulty in believing that any sacrifice, even that of Christ, could be vicarious, the bravery of these youth, heedless of all danger for themselves, attentive only to the love of home and country,

brought it back into the real thought of the world. They not only shared the cross of Christ, but actually illuminated it.

Besides all these heroes whom we can more or less define, there are countless myriads who would not recognize themselves were we to call them heroes in any sense. They are filling niches in life, but the niches are so small that neither we nor they know how to value them. They have a family to support, or they have some daily task to do, or they are invalids unable to do a stroke of work for those they love. Sorrow marks the path of these people, but it seems to have no light shining upon it. It is simply dreary and monotonous and filled with pain. They cannot stop to contemplate a purpose for their lives. If they stopped today, the world would crush them tomorrow. They can only accept life as it comes. Surely Christ acknowledges the courage and the recklessness of these, His

brothers who can receive from the world no least title to greatness. Though they do not understand how it counts, they may still face the sorrow of life and believe that the reckless courage with which they bear it brings them, by that very reason, into the vast army of the conquering Christ.

By contrast, think of the people great and small who do not accept sorrow with poise and with strength. Think of the people who shelter their children from every peril, till their children, grown fat and useless, cumber the roadway of life. Think of the people who do nothing but consult physicians and surgeons and so keep life in their useless bodies long after the time when God meant them to go to another world. Think of the people who cry "Safety first" and never take a single risk for God or man. Think of the innumerable priests and Levites who see wounded men all about them and never once turn aside

to bring relief, lest they catch some disease or incur some uncomfortable responsibility. Think of the people who, when sorrow smites them, go madly afield in gay revels, so hoping to drown their agony in forgetfulness. Think of the people who, having compassed every known device to avoid the inevitable sorrow to which all flesh is heir, and who, having it thrust upon them at the last, still protest against it, cursing God because He allows it and filling the air with their groans. Like children they are, who when sent to bed go because they must, but as they climb the stairs nastily kick each stair, by way of angry protest. One glance at these groups of people, who refuse with any sort of grace to accept the sorrow of life, shows one the high relief in which those others stand who, though they know not why, take the sorrow in, and take it consciously in all its bitterness. The number of God's

heroes has never yet been guessed in this world. Only the Judgment Day shall reveal them. Christ is the Leader of all men, and He has high use for every one of them. As His cross is the summary of His earthly career, so that larger cross, which all who love and serve Him are helping Him to create, will be the climax of His plan for eternity. Sorrow endures but for a season, and joy comes with the morning. But the joy comes because the sorrow has been felt and gracefully, nobly accepted. Then let us pray for a recklessness which is beyond the recklessness of war; a recklessness which faces life with equal daring whether it presents pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow, life or death. The pleasure we have on earth will pass. The sorrow we truly take into our souls shall not pass, but, being linked with the sorrow of all the world in Christ, shall be exalted into a joy which shall not be lost, but

which shall, with His love, proclaim a sacrifice which is eternal. Whether men know it or not, all who enter sorrow with boldness and with love, are sharers with the Lord Christ in His cross.

CHAPTER XII

Sorrow Nobly Borne a Gift to God

In the beginning of this book I spoke of sorrow as inevitable in the order of God's universe. We find God Himself, in Christ, passing through the depths. From of old it has been counted heresy to say that God the Father can suffer, and there is correct thought behind that judgment. It becomes correct, however, not by denying God the privilege of sharing the experience which He imposes on all His creatures, but by discovering a way to make sorrow an element in joy. There is always a note of pathos in the most joyous music; tears are always locked in the happiest smiles; the poems or dramas of love which reveal the highest bliss always include tragedy. Some way, we must

believe, God's infinite joy is no simple thing made up of one element alone, but a compound of many elements; and one of those elements we feel, as we dig down into life, is sorrow, such sorrow as His only Son Jesus knew when He gave Himself on the cross.

> This is the authentic sign and seal
> Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
> And more glad, till gladness blossoms bursts
> Into a rage to suffer for mankind,
> And recommence at sorrow.

If God, therefore, has placed sorrow at the heart of His universe, how may we use it that we may turn it into a gift to Him?

First, we may accept it as gold accepts the fire which refines it. We may accept it not as a punishment, but as a gift—mystic, occult if you will, defying at first our understanding—but a gift. This gift, if rightly used, will mean much to us. We observe what it may mean when we

examine certain of our friends. Here is a man who was harsh in his judgments, cynical concerning the virtue of humanity, often cutting and unkind in his wit. One day news was brought that the son he loved best had been killed in a drunken brawl. The old man almost died of the grief. But gradually he came back to life; and when he had made a full return to normal living he was altogether a changed man. None was so generous as he before human failure; none so ready to believe in the ultimate good of questionable character; and henceforth his humour only healed wounds, it never again made them. I knew that man. Here, again, is a woman who was clever, with charm, limiting her friendship to a few, self-indulgent, just missing being selfish. One day her baby died—a child full of promise. It seemed as if she would never smile again; but for her too life came back in its normal phases, and when it came she was a

changed character. Her old friends had difficulty in finding her, for she was busied over lonely and desolate people, particularly mothers of little children. Her old self-sufficiency had gone, and in its place appeared a beauty of unselfishness, which shone through her face, especially when she was moved to sympathy. The old charm was still one of her characteristics, but it was lifted into a rare graciousness which made people forget to admire her, because instinctively they gave her their love. That person, too, I knew.

Not all sorrow, you will object, has such effects. You will say that you know how it has turned a blithe man into a crabbed misanthropist; how it has turned a pleasant woman into a moping, dismal hag whom no one willingly sees. No doubt you have seen sorrow which thus disfigured its victims. No doubt too the story could be repeated through many examples. But the difficulty is that

sorrow with this diabolic power to maim the human soul has been received not as a gift of God, but as a curse from the devil. It has been resented, and fought against, and hated as the final ill in life. It is bathed in darkness, and it remains dark; no light can shine through it. When, on the other hand, sorrow is accepted as an inevitable part of God's order; when it is accepted as a gift, not as a punishment, and that gift from God Himself, I am confident that it can have only one effect, transforming the spirit which dutifully receives it into a new life, and that life beautiful, radiating the deeper joys.

No man would for his own sake be willing to be refined as by fire, having his dross burned away and the finer metal revealed, even if he were to recognize that his character had been changed. I rather think that few are aware that their sorrow has wrought any perceptible change in their char-

acters; but, were they to admit it, I suspect that they would say that they did not think the improvement worth the intensity of the suffering through which they had passed. But when, through the sorrow, they have come to more intimate terms with God; when they have discovered that God is caring, is comprehending their grief, is loving them, then, I believe, a sense of longing enters their souls. They appreciate for the first time what it means to have God for a friend. And they pray to be made in some small degree equal to that friendship, that they may give God the happiness of having a friend who has had the dross burned away, the pure gold of character refined into glowing colour. So they thank God for a gift which has so ennobled them that they may catch the joyful accents of His "Well done! . . . I call you not servant, but friend!" When we read in the Christian literature of the first century, "Whom the Lord

loveth, he chasteneth," we answer, "Yes, that He may find more to love in His beloved." And when again we read, "Our God is a consuming fire," we reply, "Yes, that He Himself may make us glorious in purity and in strength." So, for His sake, whom we love because He first loved us, we accept all sorrow as a gift from Him, because it conceals the highest joy in its mysterious depths.

We may turn this gift of sorrow as men turn a diamond in the sun and see new shafts of light from it. We may think of sorrow as harsh raw material which God gives to us, asking us to coöperate with Him in His creative power and, by using our ingenuity and our faith, to make this raw material into something glorious, and so to give it back to Him as our own gift for His happiness. We may think of an earthly father who presents to his son a tree, and then, giving him certain tools, such as an axe and saw and chisel, bids him turn

that tree into something beautiful. Through the years, with increasing strength and increasing skill and imagination, the youth fells the tree and makes its wood at last into a great chest, which he carves with the images of animals and plants. When the carving is all that he can make it, when he has filled every angle and curve with the love which he bears his father, he brings his finished gift home. The happiness on the father's face is beyond all description; this chest, he commands, shall be bequeathed from generation to generation as a precious heirloom as long as his family shall endure. So God's human children may take the raw material of sorrow and fashion it, by years of faithfulness and labour and love, into a glorious thing, a fitting gift for the loving Father on High.

We know from God's outward creation, we know from the heart of man, we know most of all through our Saviour Christ, how truly God

wishes us to know Him. He is not clothed in darkness, but in light. He wishes us, we feel sure, to understand what He means by the growing corn on the hillside, the flashing sunlight on the river, the laughter of a little child, the love of a friend. And we think that we do understand these beneficent symbols of His power and His love. But we may imagine, and with reason, that He would be grieved if we stopped with the interpretation of the easy and the bright things in life. Certainly He must wish us to attack the more difficult problems of the life in which we are set. He does not wish us, I am quite sure, to resort to any materialism, or mechanism, or dualism. He wishes us to read His responsibility into every atom of the universe and its experience, wherever and however it may affect us. And He wishes us to read that responsibility always in the light of His love. And therefore we must find a reason for the grim and

the austere and the tragic. We must lift them up into His presence, and see Him in them. Then their glory will appear—not all at once, not by theory, not by other men's experience, but only by our own living. When we have valiantly borne the sorrows of life, then we shall know them as they are in God's sight—not as bane, but as blessing. And valiantly bearing them, we shall give them back to Him; and His gratitude to us for understanding Him, and for using what He gave for the highest ends, will glorify our gift, and make it for ever treasure in heaven.

Loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength, we shall rejoice that, through sorrow, we have been able to give Him ourselves made more nearly equal to the supreme privilege of His endless friendship; and then, in our hearts, we shall bear a gift —the sorrow which He gave transfigured by us into something rich and

beautiful, justifying His wisdom in that He entrusted to humanity a task so difficult and so glorious. Sorrow nobly borne is man's best gift to the loving Father of mankind.

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AUTHOR
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Sl 15
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